

What to Do If You are Stopped by Police

Your Safety is Important to Us!

The Vienna Police Department suggests that the actions listed in this page be followed if you are stopped by a police officer. When you follow them, your encounter with the police will likely be brief, positive, and much safer for both you and the officer.

Awareness as well as involvement and cooperation are essential elements of effective policing.

Why do police stop citizens/vehicles?

You:

- fit the description of a suspect.
- witnessed a crime.
- appear to need assistance.
- have been pointed out as a suspect.
- are in an area where a crime has just occurred.
- violated the law.

When approached by a police officer:

- Follow the officer's instructions.
- Keep your hands clearly visible.
- Make movements slowly.
- Verbally inform the officer of any weapons present and whether you possess a concealed handgun permit for it. Wait for specific instructions.
- Remain calm and do not become argumentative. Cooperation on your part can greatly reduce the time the officer detains you.

Remember:

There are many reasons why you might be stopped by the police. Whatever the reason, the police officer needs your cooperation. Over reaction can make the situation worse.

Consider that the officer:

- May not be stopping you for the same reason that you perceive.
- Usually does not have any previous knowledge of you.
- Is trained to remain in a position that enhances his or her safety.
- Does not intend to offend you.

When in a vehicle:

- Follow the previous instructions.
- Remain seated in the vehicle; do not get out of the vehicle unless instructed to do so.
- Keep your hands visible.
- During darkness, turn on the interior light prior to the officer approaching.
- Produce your drivers license and vehicle registration upon request.

You may be searched:

- when arrested.
- when a warrant exists.
- when you have given consent.
- when probable cause exists.

Police officers may at any time request permission to search a person, vehicle or property. If permission is freely and knowingly given, the officer may conduct a search as granted.

If the police officer suspects that you may be armed, the officer is allowed to frisk you to see if you have any weapons. This procedure is to ensure the safety of everyone present.

Questions?

If you have any questions or comments concerning your contact with the police, or general police related questions, please contact the Vienna Police Department's Public Information Officer-MPO Bill Murray at wmurray@viennava.gov or 703.255.6396.